

My William Forster Jnr Cello



Made in 1809 by William Forster Jnr. Its first owner was James Cervetto, shown in the portrait on page 1. It is labelled under the varnish on the base "Wlm Forster Jnr 1809 No: 37". The label inside is not perfectly clear but Beare's saw it and recognised it as authentic.

Sources: From Tarisio auction information https://tarisio.com/cozio-archive/browse-the-archive/makers/maker/?Maker_ID=179

From oxford music online:

https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/browse?page=3&pageSize=20&sort=titlesort&subSite=grovemusic&t=music_People%3A6&t0=music_MusicalInstruments%3A21

Musica Kaleidoskopea <https://fdleone.com/2016/02/26/new-hyperion-haydn-string-quartets-op-50/>

History of the violin (1864) by William Sandys and Simon Andrew Forster (son of Forster III) Dover books.

The Forster family of violin and cello makers

The maker of my cello was William Forster III (or Junior). His grandfather was William Forster I, credited with the earliest surviving instruments by a member of the family. His son, William Forster II was known as "Old Forster" to distinguish him from his son William III. Old forster was born in Brampton, Cumberland in 1739. He went to London in 1759 and within a short time had established himself in St Martin's Lane. By the early 1770s his violins, copies of Stainer instruments, were in demand, and he had learnt to make the thick dark-red varnish with which almost all early Forster instruments are covered. In due course, in common with his London contemporaries, he came to be influenced by Cremonese instruments, particularly those of the Amatis. Benefited by royal patronage, he moved to the Strand in about 1785, by which time he was styling himself 'violin maker to the Duke of Cumberland and the Prince of Wales (the future King George IV)', for whom he made an elaborately decorated cello known as the "Royal George", in 1782. He also had excellent bows made for him. He was active as a music seller and publisher, issuing instrumental music by J.C. Bach, G.M. Cambini, and Haydn (over 100 works), contributing to the composer's rise to fame in London. Forster made an agreement with Haydn in 1781 for the publication rights in England of his music, and many of the manuscript copies he received from the composer are now in the British Library. Haydn had sold 'exclusive rights' to William Forster II, understandable in an age when composers had virtually no copyright protection.

By 1785 his son William III was assisting him in the shop, which became known as "Forster & Son." He died in London, 1808. The links between Haydn, Forster II and Cervetto are discussed in the Cervetto file.

William Forster III (Junior) (maker of my cello)

Sources: From Tarisio auction information. https://tarisio.com/cozio-archive/browse-the-archive/makers/maker/?Maker_ID=2607

From oxford music online

https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/browse?page=3&pageSize=20&sort=titlesort&subSite=grovemusic&t=music_People%3A6&t0=music_MusicalInstruments%3A21

He was born in London in 1764 and died there in 1824. He was third in this line of important London violin makers. He made his first instrument in 1779 and worked alongside his father from that time onward, writing 'Senr' and 'Junr' on the printed label. He took over the business upon his

father's death in 1808. Under his tenure the family business continued to engage in a motley assortment of activities, including an ill-fated foray into the greengrocer trade that precipitated his death in 1824. His output can be divided into four distinct classes, of which the cellos are particularly fine, especially those on a Stradivari model. Stainer models also exist, and in general the workmanship is excellent, with distinctive scrolls. George Craske and Samuel Gilkes are known to have supplied the firm with some portion of its inventory. Most of his instruments were also signed in ink on the rib above the tail-button, together with the date and serial number. He took over the selling and publishing side of his father's business after his marriage in July 1786, and as well as reissuing some of his father's publications he published annual country-dance books. In 1816, following a speculation in a business of which he was not knowledgeable, he went bankrupt. His last years showed declining business activity, and his sudden death in a young woman's chambers prompted a coroner's inquest.

Web links: Violin youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmwN8pRIV2o&ab_channel=JohnsonStringInstrumentInc

Youtube Forster III cello for sale https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl7BxGwr_mA&ab_channel=MII

YouTube Forster (II or III?) performance of Bach suite by Laura Peribanez :

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ69AxJELDo&ab_channel=Brompton%27sAuctioneershttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ69AxJELDo&ab_channel=Brompton%27sAuctioneers

<https://www.everand.com/book/271567910/An-Encyclopedia-of-the-Violin>

Simon Andrew Forster Violin maker. (1801 – 1870)

Source: Tarisio archive https://tarisio.com/cozio-archive/browse-the-archive/makers/maker/?Maker_ID=1601

Youngest son of William Forster III, Simon Andrew Forster followed in the family tradition of violin making and studied with his father and brother William IV. His instruments fall into two categories: lesser examples bearing a spirit varnish signed "Forster," and higher quality ones signed, "S.A. Forster London" and numbered by the endpin. His output includes violins, violas, cellos, and at least one double bass; however he is most recognized as his family's autobiographer.

He wrote (with William Sandys) *History of the violin* 1864. Republished by Dover in 2006. One of the most respected and referenced books of its kind, this authoritative volume covers not only violins but other bowed instruments. The authors explore the uses of viols and violins in musical dramas, the architectural tradition of the minstrel galleries, and the lives of lesser-known troubadours as well as legendary players such as Paganini. They also chronicle the practices of famous violin makers through the ages, from the Amati family, Stradivarius, and Guarnerius, to the Forster family and more recent artisans. An essential for every violin lover and student, this volume features more than 55 illustrations, including rare lithographs from private collections.

History of my Forster Junior cello

I bought the cello from Grace Slaney, widow of Ernst Wallace Slaney. Until early 1959 I had played trombone, first in the Boys Brigade band in Watford and then as a microbiology student at Reading University. I joined the University ten days late because severe chest pains had caused me to spend 10 days in Watford Peace Memorial Hospital, diagnosed with pericarditis. Although I had told them that the pains always followed strenuous trombone playing, they insisted this was not relevant. They said I "must give up my cross country running and swimming but the trombone is OK". At Reading I played (rarely) in a traditional jazz band but mainly in Reading Youth Orchestra, the University Orchestra and Reading Symphony Orchestra. In early 1959 the University Orchestra were rehearsing Brahms 4th Symphony. This has an alto trombone part which I played on my tenor trombone – high above its 'proper' range, requiring high pressure blowing. After a few rehearsals I

was taken to the hospital next to the university with a suspected heart attack. But I was told that the problem all along had been a pneumothorax (air pumped out of a damaged lung by too much pressure). So that was the end of my time as a trombone player. My student artist friend (John Nankivell) painted a glorious mural opposite the entrance to the music department, announcing the death of the trombone virtuoso Chris Anthony (For sale one Boosey and Hawkes trombone £26) and the birth of the Cello virtuoso Chris Anthony (wanted one cello approx £26).

The Saturday after coming out of hospital I attended the afternoon rehearsal of Reading Symphony Orchestra in Reading Town Hall. The evening concert included the cello concerto by Saint Saens. Standing in for the soloist was Ernst Slaney. Ignoring the usual English conventions, I sat next to the only other audience member in the middle of the empty hall. I commented on the wonderful cellist. "That is my husband Ernst; do you play the cello?" I told my sad story and she invited me home for tea. Pitying me, they sold me a cello and bow for £20. It was a 19th century Mittenwald. I had a few lessons from Ernst and I met up with him occasionally in the Honey Bear Café in London road, welcomed by him as I was willing to speak loudly into his slightly deaf ears. I then had some lessons in the music department. More than 30 years later, at a performance by the Welsh National Opera I recognised a frail elderly man as the Reading University professor of music (Professor Woodham); when I introduced myself he stared hard then roared with laughter – "you are the crazy student who started to learn the cello by learning the 1st Bach Cello Suite one bar at a time".

Ernst and Grace moved to Stubbington near Lee on Solent and we almost lost touch. When I came to Southampton University for an interview in 1967 I went to see them and, getting the job, I visited them regularly. Ernst was unwell but always became animated, telling stories, mainly about Beecham. He also got me to take out the Forster cello and play a little to him. After he died in 1970 he left a note to say that I should be trusted to deal with his cello. Eventually after getting a valuation from Beare's I was able to buy it. I have now had it for more than 50 years. We continued to look after Grace until she died at the age of 95. She loved to come to the concerts of the City of Southampton Orchestra to see me playing Ernst's cello (I was principal cello at the time).

Ernst Slaney was the principal cellist in the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra (later to become the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra) in the 1920s and '30s under Sir Dan Godfrey. He was the principal cellist in a number of other orchestras including the Scottish National Orchestra, and the London Philharmonic. He spoke of playing in Covent Garden under Thomas Beecham but that was probably on only a few occasions as it is not mentioned in the Groves description of him in an article about his son Ivor Slaney. He also held positions in the South African Broadcasting Corporation Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ernst also played in The Wessex Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in November 1939 to give employment to a number of musicians who, owing to war-time circumstances, had lost their work. It was conducted by Reginald Goodall and included a number of ex-members of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. In February 1942, the Wessex orchestra became officially associated with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In the Large Hall, Municipal College, Lansdowne, 1941: Five Chamber Concerts were given as part of the Bournemouth Arts Club 21st Annual Exhibition, with Harold Fairhurst and Irene Spier (violin), Cedric Morgan (viola), Ernst Slaney (cello), Helen Gaskell (oboe) and S. H. Braithwaite, Nina Milkina and Malcolm Sargent (piano) (prospectus).

Ernst's wife was Grace Elizabeth Arney (born 1893, died July 1988). They married in Bristol in 1920. She told me that she played piano for Paul Robeson in South Africa and was harrassed by Charles Mackerras on the boat home. Also by Jack Warner in his studio in Wardour Street. She pointed out where this was when we went to Beare's to have the cello valued in 1970. Ernst and Grace had a son, Ivor, born in West Bromwich in the Midlands of the United Kingdom in 1921. He was an oboe player, conductor and composer. Sadly he was estranged from his parents and I had some trouble tracking him down to tell him of his father's death so that he could attend the funeral.

Ernst Slaney told me that he had bought the Forster from the mother of Christopher Wood of Haslemere. When I Googled Christopher Wood of Haslemere I found a report from the musical times about the 40th Haslemere Festival (1964) in which Christopher Wood played harpsichord or organ. The Festival is, I think, the International Dolmetsch Early Music Festival founded by Dolmetsch who lived there.

Recordings of Ernst Slaney playing his Forster cello.etc These are of the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra. For example, The Golden Age of Light Music: with some music by By Ernst Slaney; Cello Ernst Slaney, Trumpet Phil Ledington Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra Conducted By Sir Dan Godfrey. I downloaded this from Amazon (£0.69) as an MP3 file.



YouTube clips of the orchestra with Ernst Slaney:

http://www.worldcat.org/title/clatter-of-the-clogs/oclc/156751552&referer=brief_results

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkFoFlwbUg8>

<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/bournemouth-orchestra-tannhauser-and-pathetique>

<http://admin.concertprogrammes.org.uk/html/search/verb/GetRecord/5421>

Alice Weilerstein, sister of Joshua plays a Forster:

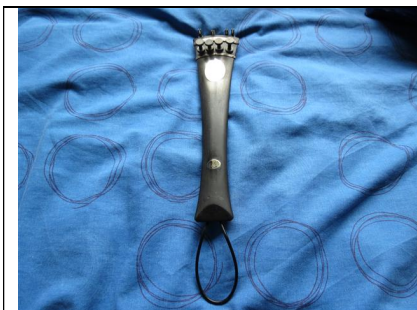
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alisa_Weilerstein

The first owner of the forster cello. I was told by Ernst Slaney that it was first owned by James Cervetto. This is described in Mr Slaney's notes in the margin of page 52 of my copy of *The violoncello and its history by Wasielewski [1st edition 1894]*, a gift from Grace Slaney. James Cervetto's initials are on the original tailpiece as a silver insert, together with the date 1809. He was born in 1747 and died in 1827. His life is described in a separate document (Cervetto).



The label inside the cello.

The original spike was made of ebony with a small metal spike. Replaced by Martin Restall with a safer modern one.



The original tail piece. This was replaced with a modern one. 1809 label and Cervetto's initials JC



Ernst Slaney

Me with my Forster Cello. I have now had it for more than 50 years. Picture taken by a City of Southampton Orchestra photographer. Date unknown but my hair is brown..



My Forster after cleaning by Martin Restall <https://www.restallsviolins.com/>

